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SUBJECT: U.S. COAST GUARD EXPECTED TO FIND DRC PORTS ISPS COMPLIANT

REF: (A) KINSHASA 1084;  
(B) STATE 125578;  
(C) 08 KINSHASA 404

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) International Port Security Program conducted an Official Country Visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) March 16-20 and found significant improvements in security at all port facilities. The USCG delegation evaluated the security measures at the ports of Matadi, SOCOPE (Societe Congolaise de Peche), Boma, and Banana in order to make additional recommendations to the Government of the DRC (GDRC) and to determine whether the DRC has come back into compliance with International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code. The USCG Country Visit report has not yet been submitted, but the preliminary finding is that DRC ports have responded to all recommendations in the December 4, 2008 demarche (Refs A and B). This most welcome - and surprising - development is due to increased GDRC support to port authorities and to the continued hard work of Port Facility Security Officers (PFSOs). End summary.

U.S. COAST GUARD SEES IMPROVED PORT SECURITY

¶2. (SBU) The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) conducted its first Official Country Visit to the DRC since 2007 from March 16 through March 20. LCDR Matthew Colmer, head of the International Port Security Program delegation, was accompanied by Port Security Liaison Officer LCDR Mike Farrell and Port Security Specialist Thomas White. The USCG delegation and econoff met with Ministry of Transportation and port authority officials, and visited the ports of Matadi, SOCOPE, Boma, and Banana in order to assess whether the DRC has implemented all of the recommendations necessary for International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code compliance.

¶3. (SBU) The DRC has been on probationary status since 2007, and econoff delivered a demarche on December 4, 2008 (Refs A and B) which allowed only 90 days to come into compliance with the final USCG recommendations. The possible consequence of non-compliance, determined by the USCG, is the re-issuance of a Port Security Advisory (PSA) that places restrictions on vessels that enter DRC ports and plan to subsequently visit U.S. ports. The probationary status, as well as any potential PSA, affects the ports of Matadi, SOCOPE, SEP Congo, Boma, and Banana.

¶4. (SBU) The USCG delegation found several improvements at all ports visited, including: the completion of perimeter walls; improved access controls; management of truck and service vehicle traffic; and identification badge processes (Ref C). The Port Director of the Congolese National Transport Agency (ONATRA), Umba di Malanda, and the Matadi Port Facility Security Officer, Medard Nsimba, have made the most significant improvements at the port of Matadi. Dock workers there no longer un-stuff containers on the quay; there is a buffer zone between ships and the containers; and port authorities maintain well-controlled vehicle traffic lanes running parallel to

the quay.

15. (SBU) LCDR Colmer made some follow-up recommendations to each port, including: putting expiration dates on identification badges for all facilities; removing small bottlenecks in pedestrian traffic; sending the Boma and Banana PFSOs to formal PFSO training; and updating the DRC's port information listed on the International Maritime Organization's database. Colmer also encouraged the DRC's participation in the West and Central Africa Port State Control Memorandum of Understanding (a.k.a. the Abuja MOU), and suggested that on-going port facility security plan assessments take into account planned changes to each facility.

#### PORTS RECEIVE OVERDUE GDRC SUPPORT

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16. (SBU) The USCG delegation met with Minister of Transportation Matthieu Mpita on March 16, and delivered an out-brief to the Minister on March 20. On both occasions, Mpita said the GDRC took the USCG recommendations very seriously and that maritime security was of great importance to the government. Mpita said he visited all three major ports in February in order to make sure the USCG Country Visit would go smoothly. Mpita also sent his Maritime Advisor and the Ministry's Director of Maritime Waterways to accompany the delegation during their port visits. Mpita's Chief of Staff, Enerst Ilang'ikwa Bonkanya, arranged a meeting on March 20 with the CEO of ONATRA, Claude Pecune-Ponson, for the USCG to present all further recommendations to improve security at the ports. During meetings with both Minister Mpita and the ONATRA CEO, the USCG delegation shared their views on the significant progress

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they saw in each port. Colmer said the next step would be an official USCG report that will be delivered to the Ministry of Transportation through Embassy Kinshasa in the next four to six weeks.

17. (SBU) Comment: The Coast Guard's positive evaluation gives a big boost to port operations in the DRC. The ONATRA officials and PFSOs have been working diligently over the last two years to bring the DRC back into ISPS code compliance. Lack of GDRC support and funding had, until recently, been the key impediment to their success. The USCG delegation received high-level attention every step of the way during their visit, including courtesy calls on the Governor of the Bas-Congo province and the mayor of Boma. The improvements in all ports were both remarkable and surprising, given the short 90-day timeframe and the historically short shrift the GDRC has given the issue of port security.

18. (SBU) Comment cont'd: The report of this visit, once approved by the USCG, will likely find that the GDRC adequately complied with all recommendations made in the December 4 demarche. There will be a separate decision by the USCG, based largely on Colmer's Country Visit report, whether to find the DRC compliant with ISPS code. The delivery of good progress reports on March 20 reinforced the idea that success with security measures is feasible, and encouraged the ONATRA and Ministry of Transportation officials to continue their hard work. Declaring the DRC to be ISPS code compliant will be an important accomplishment for the GDRC and follows on the heels of other positive developments in the country, including the March 8 victory of DRC's national soccer team at the Africa cup. Although unrelated, these two accomplishments demonstrate that with hard work, the DRC can make progress. We hope the advances in addressing security concerns in the DRC's ports will have a positive psychological impact and will spur those working in other sectors to reach higher. End Comment.

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